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Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all and its impact on sustainable development

Statement submitted by Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers and Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2006/100.

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Statement

As NGOs representing Catholic missioners who live and work in some of the world's most impoverished communities, we are committed to protecting the dignity of each human life and enhancing the integrity of creation.

We are concerned that, rather than experiencing real benefits from growth and open economies, the people with whom we live and work and the environment are bearing the burden of the globalization process. In many countries Maryknoll missioners have seen whole sectors of the economy in which poor people were participating, such as small scale and subsistence farming and small, locally owned businesses, destroyed. Millions of people now work in the informal sector without regular income or benefits.

Maryknoll missioners have accompanied local communities in many countries, including Mexico, Bolivia, Peru, Nicaragua, Viet Nam, the Philippines, Panama, Chile, and the United Republic of Tanzania as they have created alternative sources of income; struggled to learn new skills for their own survival; or tried to protect the environment. We have brought representatives of these communities to meet with farmers in the United States of America, United States policymakers and World Bank officials, and to share their ideas at the WTO ministerial meeting in Cancun and United Nations meetings on Financing for Development and Sustainable Development. We will look for similar opportunities in the future.

Also, around the world women are the heads of households and the sole wage earner in many families. They make up the bulk of unskilled labour and often have the primary responsibility of caring for the family. Because of their tremendous responsibilities, women often do not have time to increase their levels of education and skill. Thus they swell the ranks of a non-union workforce that will take the most undesirable jobs where human rights, safety standards and health conditions are often ignored.

Maryknoll missioners work with women in Brazil, Guatemala, Chile, Bolivia, Mexico, Nicaragua and elsewhere, to increase their self-esteem and to enable them to be more self-reliant in the workplace. We have brought a number of these women to meetings of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. We will continue to do so.

In an ongoing effort to promote the proposals of grassroots communities for healthier rural economies, this year we will support a bi-national congress of Mexican and United States small farmers and farm workers to develop a common strategy for changing United States and Mexican farm policy in order to increase agricultural and rural job opportunities in both countries.

All along these actions we have been and we will continue supporting people's efforts to create new alternatives of productive employment and dignified work within a participatory sustainable development framework.

We believe that this broken world, so sharply divided between rich and poor, will be a better place if we listen with care to voices from the margins now much too infrequently heard and almost never heeded. We commit ourselves to this task and call on powerful decision-makers to do the same.